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Timely Observations

THE NATIONAL Student Association, bloody but only slightly bowed, is marching squarely into the field of fire. At its Congress at College Park, Md., Robert Amory, Jr., former deputy director of intelligence in the Central Intelligence Agency, was one of the panelists in a discussion of "Secrecy in a Free Society: the CIA."

The NSA leaders may be burnt, but they don't fear the fire. Rather, they seem to be pouring on fuel. Reservations for this year's student Congress are more than double the rate of last year. More than 1,500 delegates from 330 campuses were there. In its own publicity NSA suggests that heated debate will arise over Vietnam and the NSA connection with CIA.

The word early this year that NSA, the largest and oldest and probably the most respectable student association in the United States, had been subsidized for years by the Central Intelligence Agency created an almost immediate gag reaction. It triggered a series of disclosures, some of them by a former CIA insider, that traced a huge pattern of subsidy to private groups here and abroad.

All the publicity seems not to have hurt NSA. Since February chapters at Brandeis and Colorado State have dropped out of the student organization. But, 20 colleges and universities which had not previously been members joined NSA.

"We're a lot stronger than we were before," says W. Eugene Groves, NSA president. "More people know about us and we have some new sources of financial support."

began in 1950 with a \$12,000 grant to send a team of students to Europe and Africa to study other student groups. Eventually the intelligence agency came to providing 80 per cent of NSA's annual budget. The staff of the student group was used to gather intelligence on student leaders abroad.

Now NSA says its only tie is rent-free use of a house in Washington provided by CIA. Some arrangement is being sought to neutralize this obligation. Meantime, though it has had to cut back expenses, the student group has been getting funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Office of Education, the Department of State, and private sources.

A strong minority may argue at the mid-August conference that the NSA should disband and begin anew. The argument, according to Richard Stearns, international affairs vice president, was that NSA officers still maintain covert ties with the CIA. However, NSA leaders have no expectation of defeat.

Robert Amory, the man who told the CIA story of College Park, said recently that he feared the people who have cooperated in foreign countries with U. S. organizations in the past may be in danger of arrest, harassment, or worse. The damage the disclosures earlier this year did to the intelligence community are probably incalculable.

Just the same, intelligence people will tell you that despite a built-in flap, subsidizing NSA was worth the gamble. The students did much throughout the world to counter the openly subsidized work of students of non-democratic societies.

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